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1801. The function of n represented by $\phi(n)$ is, however, generally called Euler's function, since Euler had studied some of its fundamental properties before the appearance of Gauss's "Disquisitiones."

It is a well-known fact that it is easy to find errors in nearly every book and the few errors noted above would be of very little interest if they did not occur in such an excellent work. As they were met incidentally, it is not implied that they include the most important mathematical errors in the work under consideration. They may perhaps serve to emphasize the great importance of a thorough study of the question on hand before expressing a definite conclusion, and also the large amount of labor involved in such a study. There is a vast amount of error afloat even in the best literature of the present time, and this calls for a larger army of workers who investigate questions *ab initio* and who are fearless in resisting the tendency towards the further spreading of these weeds on the intellectual earth.

G. A. MILLER

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MORE WASHINGTON SCIENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: I have been reading with much interest the recent communications on Washington science. No one will deny credit to the scientists who are giving the government department their best energies. Still, these same men are occasionally lacking in—I am almost tempted to say a system of professional ethics. I have been quite near the inside of Washington methods and herewith present the case.

In the event of choosing a scientific assistant for a vacancy, I have known in several cases that the matter of minimum salary the applicant would accept was of paramount importance while the ability and training of the applicant seemed to be an insignificant matter. I know cases where men with practically no college or scientific training of any sort were preferred to college graduates with experience, because the former could be obtained for five dollars a week less. I know a case in one

division where \$100 per year represents the difference between the beginning salary of an untrained man and that of a post-graduate of a large eastern university. I do not refer to men appointed under the civil service competitive examination, but rather to those who come under the general heading of agents and experts, who are appointed merely at the recommendation of a division chief. Many of us know of cases wherein good men were discouraged, by this state of affairs, to the extent of entering other lines of endeavor. It is now in order for some one to sign an earnest communication containing the phrases "love of science," "mercenary," etc. To one interested in this subject I would suggest looking up the records of resignations of very good men from the government bureaus as a result of the order of Secretary Wilson (1909) that no promotions were to be made for the next fiscal year. Is there not a system of ethics in these matters?

For obvious reasons, I emulate my predecessors and sign myself

A FORMER WASHINGTONIAN

COLUMBIA AND BERLIN

A STATEMENT has recently appeared in a number of newspapers to the effect that Columbia University having passed the University of Berlin in attendance is now the largest university in the world. As a matter of fact it will probably be several years before the attendance at Columbia exceeds that of Berlin. The error in calculation has arisen primarily from the fact that the Columbia figures include not only the fall attendance but also the enrollment of the summer session of 1911, proper allowance, of course, being made under duplication for the summer session students who returned for work this fall. The figures of the University of Berlin, with which a comparison has been made, include, however, only the attendance during the winter semester, the summer semester enrollment not being considered. Inasmuch as registration at the University of Berlin for the winter semester of 1911-12 is not yet completed, it is simpler to make a comparison between